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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002732

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF GOL REQUESTS, IDEAS

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Ever since Hizballah initiated the current Israeli-Hizballah crisis, PM Siniora and other GOL officials have asked us for help in several specific areas. In most cases, we have politely explained why we could not help (or why any assistance was contingent upon the Lebanese taking action first -- e.g., persuading the Israelis to lift the air and sea embargo completely). But we endorsed some of the requests that we thought had merit, and we forwarded them on for Washington's consideration, in hopes that action on them might help restore a positive image of the U.S. in Lebanon. Many of these requests remain relevant now, even after the cessation of hostilities. In addition, the Embassy has, based on our understanding of the situation here, suggested some ideas of our own. Given that these requests and ideas have appeared (and sometimes reappeared) in various messages, we wanted to compile them all into a single checklist. We would be grateful for any updates on Washington thinking regarding these requests and ideas.

¶2. (C) ASSISTANCE IN ACQUIRING 10,000 KALISHNIKOVS OR EQUIVALENTS (per Beirut 2680 and Beirut 2701). The Internal Security Forces, undergoing recruitment and with expanded responsibilities to replace Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) units deployed to border areas, do not have sufficient weapons. PM Siniora, wanting to give us what he calls "a digestible" figure, lowered the actual request to 2,000 in conversations with USG officials. But we are confident that the 10,000 figure cited by Acting Minister of Interior Ahmad Fatfat and ISF Commander Ashraf Rifi is closer to the real need. The GOL holds out faint hopes that we would buy the weapons. But the GOL, as a fallback, wants us to (a) identify and push another donor, which the Lebanese assume will be an Arab country, and (b) coordinate on the incoming shipment, so that the Israelis do not block or seize the weapons.

¶3. (SBU) OBTAIN ISRAELI AGREEMENT TO UNINTERRUPTED FUEL SUPPLIES TO LEBANON (per Beirut 2522, Beirut 2587, and Beirut 2615). While we thought that the labor-intensive, often frustrating coordination (which relied on extraordinary efforts by Embassy Tel Aviv and CCC, to whom we remain grateful) for fuel deliveries was behind us, it appears as though the Israelis have resumed the blockade on fuel imports to Lebanon. Rather than wait until another debilitating and psychologically damaging fuel crisis threatens, we hope that Washington would agree to work with the Israelis on blanket clearances for fuel deliveries (with Israel able to stop suspicious fuel ships on the high seas for inspection). If the sea blockade remains in place, we do not want to have to scramble as we did in recent weeks, relying on the good will of our colleagues posted to Israel, to prevent the humanitarian crisis that would spread if power plants shut

down for lack of fuel. Moreover, we do not relish the profiteering the Syrian black marketeers will again enjoy, once panic over fuel breaks out again. Contracting for fuel deliveries must occur weeks in advance of the actual arrival of the ships, and four ships have been denied clearance by Israel this week alone.

¶4. (SBU) OBTAIN ISRAELI CONCURRENCE TO UNINTERRUPTED HUMANITARIAN AND FOOD SUPPLIES (per Beirut 2615). This is similar to the fuel supply question above. This week, the Israelis denied clearance to a shipment of beef cattle, which began dying on board. Eventually, the cattle were unloaded in Latakia and shipped overland at increased cost. We know that the Israelis see the seaport blockade as one of the few pressure points available to prod the Lebanese into taking steps along the Syrian border to stop arms smuggling, but the reports of dying beef cattle and higher-priced meat shipped in from Syria does little to promote our own image here. (We note as an aside that, with the cessation of hostilities now in force, there is probably nothing more harmful to our image than the perception that we are indulging Israel in keeping the air and sea blockade in place. Our response -- that the GOL has the power to get the blockade lifted by asking for UNIFIL help on the borders and at the air and seaports -- is accurate but has little resonance here.)

¶5. (SBU) CONTINUATION OF THE BEIRUT-AMMAN AIR BRIDGE (per Beirut 2522). While the passenger shuttle we proposed is working (thanks to help we greatly appreciate from Embassy Tel Aviv, Embassy Amman, and Washington), the Lebanese civil aviation authorities tell us that the Jordanians report that Israel will not give approvals for any flights beyond August ¶27. While we would hope that the Lebanese will have taken the security steps at the Rafiq Hariri Beirut International

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Airport (BIA) that would allow a full lifting of the blockade by August 27, we suggest that we secure continuation of the air bridge now, just in case. We would like to see a second city added -- a European destination with credible security arrangements -- but, at a minimum, we hope we can get Israeli concurrence now on a continuation of the current service.

¶6. (C) ACCELERATION OF THE VISIT OF UN/OLA CHIEF NICOLAS MICHEL TO BEIRUT (per Beirut 2703). The Ambassador will meet Minister of Justice Charles Rizk on Friday to discuss progress toward the establishment of the special tribunal with international character to try the Hariri assassination suspects. Many Lebanese contacts urge that, to signal to Syria that the focus remains on the Hariri assassination, UN/OLA Chief Michel, whose office is responsible for the draft UN-GOL protocol on the tribunal, come to Lebanon quickly to initial an agreement we understand is virtually complete. One idea is that UNSYG Annan bring Michel with him, to demonstration high-level attention to the tribunal. This would help compensate for the chilling effect Annan's anticipated visit to Syria is likely to have here. But whether Annan includes Michel or not, we agree that it would be preferable for Michel to come to Beirut as soon as possible.

¶7. (SBU) PROVISION OF STEEL TRESTLE, BAILEY-TYPE, OR OTHER TEMPORARY BRIDGES (per Beirut 2535, Beirut 2615, and Beirut 2702). This is something PM Siniora has requested of our British and French colleagues as well. He seeks the sort of military bridges that could be dropped over spans pending permanent construction. We raise this for Washington's consideration simply because of the insistence in Siniora's voice when he mentions the issue. This is lower on our list of priorities, given that we do not think it is a good idea for high-profile U.S. military assets to be working on construction projects in Lebanon now.

¶8. (C) SUGGESTION TO THE UN ON ITS INTERNAL COORDINATION (per Beirut 2615). As we noted, UN coordination efforts on humanitarian relief and reconstruction are hindered by the UN

organization here. Given the weakness of GOL central coordination of donor efforts, the UN's role needs to be that much stronger. One needed fix is the transfer of the UN's Designated Security Officer (DSO) away from UNDP and UNICEF (where it is temporarily housed in the UNDP Director's absence) to either UN Humanitarian Coordinator David Shearer or UNSYG Personal Representative to Lebanon Geir Pedersen. This may sound on the surface to be unnecessary micromanaging of what should be a UN decision, but the current set-up is devastatingly dysfunctional. The DSO decides which UN officials can come to Lebanon in this problematic security environment. The UNDP Director uses this gatekeeping role as a tool to maintain power over her peers. The UN personnel permitted to come to post, then, are not based on the current needs but on what they can do for the UNDP Director. Given that the international community's non-security priorities in Lebanon revolve around humanitarian relief and reconstruction, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator should not have to grovel before UN colleagues to get the staff he needs in place. We wonder whether a discreet phone call could be made to UN headquarters suggesting this change.

FELTMAN